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COMPETE PROJECT

Strengthening the competitiveness and export potential of key sectors essential to the future prosperity of the Palestinian economy

**Weekly report:
Aug 5 – Aug 9**

Submitted by DAI to USAID, West Bank Gaza
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AGRIBUSINESS SECTOR

ACTIVITIES & PROJECT INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

Al Salam – Contract Farming

- *“I never realized that we had factories like that in the West Bank,”* a proud message from Mowafaq, a farmer from Jenin visiting the **Al Salam Factory** this week, a factory that COMPETE has supported technically these past months to deliver over 160 MT of an industrial variety of Red Potato “Desiree” use for processing French Fries.
- Based outside of Hebron, Al Salam factory specializes in deep frozen products. They were the first beneficiary of the contract growing scheme that COMPETE initiated with local farmers to produce, exclusively under contract, various diversified crops to provide year round supply to the factory with Palestinian produce to substitute over 80 % of raw material currently imported to supply the processing plant.
- **Contract farming** is a way to raise small and medium farmers’ incomes by delivering technology, best growing practices, market information and controlling price fluctuation. COMPETE will organize a series of workshops over the next few months where farmers will speak to packing house and processing plants buyers and legal teams to tie up contract growing for future crops supply.
- **Compete will also support** Al-Salam factory in upgrading its facilities and in acquiring the ISO 22000 certification (follow up is currently made to that regard), which would enhance its endeavors to enter new international markets, something that will ultimately benefit the farmers.

Intermediate result contributed to: Linking Local Value Chain to International Value Chain

- **C**
o **Milestones:**
m ✓ Final delivery of potato crop to factory plant for processing
p ✓ Final payment received by farmer (Mr. Mowafaq)
e ✓ Farmer received a new pre-order from Al Salam factory for new crops to be
t delivered during the upcoming seasons, – 800 tons potato – 100 tons carrots
e – 100 tons sweet con)

team met with **Palestine Investment Fund** (PIF) to explore potential cooperation and support. PIF is currently considering investing in new businesses, and is looking at commercial agriculture as potential area of investment. COMPETE will look through its direct beneficiaries list, identify potential investment opportunities and link them when appropriate with PIF. Compete had arranged for a first meeting between PIF and West Bank Salt Co. early September as a primary potential investment opportunity.

Aquaculture

- Compete' team visited Al-Sabi Nursery in Qalqilya to look into the use of aquapoinic system as a viable mean of irrigation. Al Sabi Nursery recently installed this system and has been using it to irrigate one tenth of its young seedlings. Their pond produces 20 sqm daily of enriched water containing Amoniac, while the daily water consumption of the nursery is around 250 sqm. Based on this, Compete is considering support to expand to have ten more additional ponds which would maximize the production and reduce the cost for the company. Other potential area of support to Al-Sabi and to local farmers is solving the issue of surplus in guava at the peak of the season. This can be done through several possible interventions through:
 - Product diversification: production of avocados and mangos using Nablus West waste-water plant; once it's fully operational. However, there is a lack in the West Bank area of rootstock suitable for treated waste water, an issue that Compete will continue to address.
 - Introduction of cold storage houses: that would increase the shelf life of guava and increase the market windows of opportunity
 - Developing a marketing strategy to support farmers find new markets for their guava produce of 3000 trees.

Intermediate result contributed to: # of Palestinian Products & Services Meeting International Standards or Specifications

Date Pollination

- The Bio economics of **date pollination** could be a key cornerstone the future growth of date plantations in the Jordan Valley. This week, COMPETE visited the only producer or extractor of pollen from the Medjool Dates Palm Company, Naeem Issawi. Palm dates trees are dioceses species (meaning that each is all female flowers or male flowers.) The Jordan Valley has over 125,000 female trees and only 1800 male trees producing on average 600 gr per tree of pollen. If pollen collection is done correctly, the expected quantity would be 1000 Kg. Linked with the extensive commercial development of Palm Dates in the Jordan Valley for exports expected to come on-stream in the next 2-4 years, COMPETE will be looking to assist this company to increase extraction volume and better pollination. This activity will also reduce uncertain supply and dependence on imported pollen by:
 - Facilitating better collection of pollen
 - Enhancing pollination techniques
 - Improving export potential in the future for Palestinian pollen.

Intermediate result contributed to: Categories for Skilled Workforce to Increase Demand



Al-Salam Factory, outskirts of Hebron



New aquaculture pond feeding seedling in nursery, Al Sabi Nursery

Forecast for next week:

- Visit Al Salam factory; new equipment supply to farmers and soil sampling.
- Visit Nablus Laboratory; prioritize needed equipment for up grade.
- CIBER Fresh Herbs & Dates Industry, Ankars Hotel Ramallah, results of findings and economic solutions forwards.
- Aug 15th Nablus conference on Waste Water Reuse, Environment Impact
- Jordan Valley visit to dates farmers, update new season and crop information to be published on international website.

TOURISM SECTOR

ACTIVITIES & PROJECT INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

Hotel Classification

- In order to facilitate a classification system that raises the level, service and quality across the sector, assessors need to facilitate and provide guidance to hotels to increase their standards. They must therefore not only provide key skills but also competencies that will enable them to fulfill on their role. Once chosen, they will receive training and the most successful becomes training-trainer. To support this requirement Assessor Competence and Capability Profiles have been drafted in advance of recruitment
- The Ministry is finalizing their letter of collaboration to AHA and has agreed to the draft plan for implementation.
- MoTA expressed its interest to implement the Hotel Classification system as a priority. Drafting on hotel assessment criteria has commenced in advance of individual meetings with working group members next week.

Site Renovation and Rehabilitation

- On August 8 and 9 the Taskforce visited Taybeh, Hisham's Palace and Bethany to identify interventions and formulate the scope of work for short-term interventions on these sites. Furthermore, preparations and assessments are underway for medium term interventions and local community engagements The Taskforce also conducted an in-depth assessment for site renovation to gain an understanding of the following:
 - Past projects and interests; past partners; proposed civic projects; zoning development plans; maintenance workers responsibilities; local tourism statistics; expenditure of tourists; other activities in the area; visitor circulation routes.
 - Prioritized short-term and medium-term "wish list" interventions drafted in co-operation with stakeholders.
- Further meetings in connection with the Site Renovation activity were also conducted with Riwaq in regards to projects undertaken in Taybeh and in particular external renovations to buildings in the historic old city; and with the parish priest of Burqin Church to ascertain areas of collaboration and to obtain a greater understanding of the challenges of the church as a tourism destination.
- A meeting was also undertaken with MoTA to address the cross-cutting issue identified in the Site Renovation Assessment of the need for Specialized Licensed Tour Guides. MoTA have agreed to address the issue as a priority and to sign a MoU to develop and implement the activity.

***Intermediate result contributed to: # of Palestinian Products & Services Meeting
International Standards or Specifications***

Milestones:

- ✓ All five sites highlighted for renovation have been assessed and meetings undertaken with key stakeholders
- ✓ A draft topline intervention plan has been developed for each of the five agreed sites
- ✓ MoTA has agreed to licensing specialized tour guides

- Following previous assessments, a gap analysis was undertaken and finalized for the **Hospitality School Activity**. Decisions have now been finalized on:
 - Certification of the Training Modules
 - Certification of the trainers
 - Certification of the 2 year program
 - Location of the training Center based geographical needs
- Training modules are being finalized for the Hospitality workforce, based on the GAP's Report. Management, supervisors, and line employees are being targeted for the training.

Intermediate result contributed to: Categories for Skilled Workforce to Increase Demand

Milestones:

- ✓ Developed GAP Analysis for Hospitality school
- ✓ Drafted training modules for in-service staff priorities/potential sources for in-service training modules being finalized

Forecast for next week:

- Supply and Demand paper is being finalized and a feasibility study for the proposed Hospitality School will commence next week.
- Finalize draft structure for hotel classification assessment criteria.
 - Undertake individual meetings with working group team.
- Further meetings and discussions on the site renovation implementation plan, time frame, budget and partners.
 - Proceed with identifying quick impact interventions on the five selected sites
 - Proceed with identifying and agreeing on areas of collaboration to license specialized tour guides.



Taskforce meeting with Mayor of Taybeh



Meeting with Site Architect at Hisham's Palace



Prioritizing site interventions in Bethany



St. George Church in Bethany

ICT SECTOR

ACTIVITIES & PROJECT INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

Microsoft Partner Network Development

- COMPETE is working with Microsoft Dubai office to design a new activity for enabling the Palestinian Microsoft Partners to form new international partnerships, and solidify private sector partnership through education.
- Microsoft has described to Compete Project the concept of the Microsoft IT Academy. This program will benefit both the private sector and universities, by adjusting the curriculum currently taught in universities, providing the vehicle for delivering advanced Microsoft courses not yet offered in the Palestinian Territories, necessary for advancing the capabilities of the Microsoft partners.

Intermediate result contributed to: Linking Local Value Chain to International Value Chain

Expanding the Oracle Training initiative:

- COMPETE held several conference calls with the Middle East Director of Oracle, Mr. Raed Hajarat, to develop a framework where Palestinian and Jordanian IT/software companies would increase their level of competency and improve their readiness for regional and international projects.
- This activity would involve (but is not limited to) signing partnerships between Palestinian and Jordanian companies to jointly implement international projects.

Connect (Ramallah) Event

- Preparations are underway for the CONNECT event scheduled for 12th of September. This is the kick off for a series of recurring events that will target entrepreneurs, academics and members of the private sector, bringing them together to expand their networks, share ideas, and build connections between young startup owners and successful entrepreneurs in the sector.
- RFQ (Request for Quotation) was sent out to three PR companies to support event planning activities for the CONNECT event. Two proposals were received; Al Nasher was selected as their proposal best addressed the RFQ specifications and had a lower price.

Intermediate result contributed to: Categories for Skilled Workforce to Increase Demand

Milestones:

- ✓ PR Company Selected
- ✓ Program Agenda Compiled

Forecast for next week:

- Connect Event planning continues
 - Confirm Local Speakers
 - Receive detailed design from the PR company for Theme, logo, venue design
- 3G Economic Study
 - Select Palestinian, regional and international economists

STONE & MARBLE SECTOR

ACTIVITIES & PROJECT INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

- **Trade Show Participation**

- Verona Trade Show (September 25-29) preparations continue with details regarding booth design, construction, types of samples and logistics.
- Organizing meetings with stone producers, marketing agents, equipment suppliers with special concentration on sludge and product development in Italy.
- Meeting with Next Step for Trade 'specialized marketing' August 9th to sign an agreement regarding participation at the Big 5 trade show in Dubai.

Intermediate result contributed to: Linking Local Value Chain to International Value Chain

Milestones:

- ✓ Follow-up with companies attending the Marmomacc (Verona) trade show
- ✓ Initial preparations for the Big 5 trade show in Dubai

- Sector and **CIBER** progress financial modeling – identified sector challenges
 - Extensive industry research, including gathering statistics, surveys, historical documentation regarding sludge quantities, filter presses, and other sector issues.
- **Filter Press** Evaluation and Maintenance
 - Meeting conducted with Lamar Import and Marketing on August 6th in Hebron to discuss details regarding the launch of the **filter press evaluation**, which will include the following: cost of servicing filter presses that are not in-use, cost of upgrading filter presses to reach maximum capacity and expected sludge quantities. Expected launch is the week of August 12th.
 - Meeting conducted with Al-Misk Industrial Machine on August 6th in Hebron to discuss details regarding their progress of constructing high quality filter presses, expected capacity and servicing filter presses constructed by them.

Intermediate result contributed to: # of Palestinian Products & Services Meeting International Standards or Specifications

Milestones:

- ✓ Draft scope of work regarding filter press evaluation and table regarding data collected for Lamar



Lamar, Hebron



Al Misk, Hebron

Forecast for next week:

- Preparatory work regarding the second year work plan activities
- Continue preparations for Marmomacc trade show
- Launch of the Filter Press evaluation
- Preparations for field visits with companies regarding sludge technology in Italy
- Meeting with Verona Marble and Industrial Investment to look into new product development including sludge technology

Calendar of Events – August 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Meetings with; Union of stone & marble (trade show updates), Lamar (filter press evaluation & refurbishing), Al-Misk (Filter Press construction and Maintenance)					
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		Verona Marble Company (sludge future activities) CIBER Workshop, Ramallah, stakeholders of the fresh Produce Industry and service providers. “Cost benefit Analysis” to the top 4 to 5 priority impediments.	Hotel Classification Workgroup Meeting (Bethlehem, TBC)	Filter Press Evaluation Launch		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
(EID)	(EID)	(EID)				
26	27	28	29	30	31	
	Workshop, Ramallah, association building and the legal environment: “other legal options” (date TBC)					
September: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Tourism event Ramallah ICT CONNECT event(s) (September 12th) Oracle Training Launch, (TBC, Sept 15th) 						